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PART IV.

Official Papers.

REVENUE AND AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT.

MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITIONS.

Note on Persian Carpets taken from "The Land of the Lion and Sun," by G. J. Wills, M. D., published 1883 (pages 149 to 152).

The finer and more valuable carpets were not new—in fact, few really good carpets are made now-a-days. At the time I am speaking of (sixteen years ago) the magenta aniline dyes were unknown to the carpet-makers of Persia, and all the colors except the greens were fast. Now-a-days the exact reverse is the case. A very brilliant carpet is produced, and if a wet handkerchief is rubbed on it, *the colors come off*. These are not fast, and the carpet is worthless.

The aniline dyes are particularly used in the Meshed carpets, and as these are the showiest and most attractive, they are largely exported. Of course a native will not look at them, for when he buys a carpet he expects it to last *at least* a century. He is generally not disappointed. One sees many carpets which are quite fifty-years old with hardly a sign of wear.

At the time of which I am speaking, carpets had very seldom been exported from Persia, and consequently there was no rubbish manufactured. Now (1883) it is quite different; if a very good carpet is wanted, an old one must be bought.

The carpets made for the European market are coarse and the weaving loose. Many, indeed, are made of fast colors; but gaudy patterns only are used, and the fine and original patterns formerly in vogue are disappearing. Of a couple of hundred carpets brought for sale, perhaps there may be only six distinct patterns, though of course the borders and arrangement of the colors may vary. The favorite patterns are the "Gul Anar" and "Herati." The latter is certainly very effective, and is the pattern of nine-tenths of the carpets exported.

To choose a carpet, the first thing is to see if the colors are fast. This is done by rubbing with a wet cloth. If the slightest tinge is communicated to this, the carpet should be rejected. Then if the carpet is limp, and can be doubled on itself like a cloth, it is "shulberf" (loosely woven) and scamped. A carpet which is well woven (I am speaking of new ones) is always stiff. Greens in the pattern should be avoided, as they will fade to a drab; but this drab is not displeasing. White, on the contrary, in time becomes a pale yellow, and is a good wearing color, and should be chosen rather than avoided.

The thinner and finer the carpet is the greater is its value. The size of the thread of the wool should be noticed, and the smaller it is the better. It should be remembered that, in the question of price, a thinner thread means a great difference in the amount of labor in making.

The size, too, of the pattern should be noted, as a large pattern is proportionately much cheaper. Again, the finer patterns being only undertaken by the best weavers, one is more likely to get a good carpet with a fine pattern than with a coarse. The general effect, too, should be noted. This is never bad, but at times an eccentric pattern is come across.

The softer the carpet is to the hand the more valuable it is, as a rule, if it be not a Meshed carpet with aniline dye. These latter should be avoided, as they always fade and are of very small value.

One of the reasons why Oriental carpets last so long is that chairs are not used, and they are not walked on by boots, and so dirtied and worn, but by bare feet. The carpet should now be doubled and the ends applied to each other. If one is broader than the other it shows careless work, and the carpet should be rejected as "kaj" (uneven), or rather crooked.

It must be then spread on a level floor and smoothed to see if it lies flat. Many carpets have "shatúr," or creases; these never come out. The carpet never lies flat, and wears in a patch over the "shatúr."

If all is yet satisfactory, the carpet must be turned bottom upwards and the edges carefully examined. If any darns are seen in the edges of the carpet, it must be rejected, for the Persians have a plan of taking out any creases by either stretching the edges, which often break under the process, or, if there is a redundancy, cutting it out and fine-drawing it so skilfully that it is only detected on carefully examining the back. Such carpets are worthless.

The top of the carpet should now be inspected. If the edging of cotton at the top or bottom be blue with no white in it the carpet is rubbish, and merely a thing got up for sale—absolutely a sham. The edge or finish should be either white cotton or black wool. The latter is by far the best, but is seldom seen now-a-days. The all woollen carpets are mostly made near Murghab, and by the wandering tribes of Fars; they are very seldom exported, and are always of sad patterns, often very irregular.

In making a carpet, the women who weave it will often run out of the exact shade of wool used in some part of the pattern or even ground-work; they will continue with another shade of the same color. This has a curious effect to the European eye, but the native does not look on it as a defect.

The value in Persia of a carpet in the present day may, if perfect (either new or old), be reckoned at from fifteen shillings to two pounds a square yard. In the larger carpets nothing can be obtained under a pound a square yard.

Of course there are a few carpets which have been made to order for great personages which are worth more than the price I have given, but these are not easily obtained and only at *prix fou*. By the term *carpet*, I mean what Persians call *kali*, that is, in contradistinction to *farsch*. *Kali* is our idea of carpet, that is, a floor-covering having a pile.

Farsch means floor-covering generally, and may be "nammad," or felt, or "gelim," a thin, pileless floor-covering of coarse pattern, and much used in Europe as a *portière*. In these "gelim" white greatly predominates, and they soon get soiled and dirty. They are only used in Persia by the villagers and poor.

The *farsch* Hamam-i, or bath carpet, is a finer species of "gelim" made near Kermanshah. Both sides are alike, the patterns are elaborate and beautiful, and the colors very lovely; but they fade, being mostly of aniline dye, and are harsh to the feel. Their only recommendation is their extreme portability.

The "nammad" or felt (carpets) are generally used by Persians to go round the room and act as a frame to the carpet (*kali*) which occupies the top and centre.

They are three in number for each room; two *kanáreh*, or side pieces, a yard to a yard and a half wide, and a *sir-andáz*, literally that which is thrown over the head (of the apartment). The *kanáreh* are from half to two and a half inches in thickness, and are usually of a light-brown or yellow-ochre color, being ornamented with a slight pattern of blue and white, or red and green, which is formed by pinches of the wool inserted when the felt is made.

The best "nammad" are made at Yazd, and are often expensive. They cost about thirty shillings a square yard, and will last a century. They are two inches thick.

Nammad, however, are now getting out of fashion, for they will not stand the wear produced by chairs which are coming into common use among the rich. Carpets are taking their place.

By Order,

C. S. BAYLEY,

Offg. Under-Secy. to the Govt. of India.